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ON THE POWDERED SUGAR OF COMMERCE.

By E. H. S. BAILEY and H. L. JACKSON.

IT has been said that although sugar constitutes about 30 per cent of the trade of the wholesale grocer, it gives him 75 per cent of his trouble. This is due to the fact that it is sold on such a close margin that, although it takes considerable capital to handle it, the profit is small, or may, indeed, in the fluctuations of the market, be a negative quantity.

The ordinary grocer handles only a few grades of sugar, as there is no demand for a great variety, but there are about thirty different grades on the market. These are of different colors and degrees of fineness. Those sugars upon which most work has been done in the process of manufacturing sell for a higher price, but the cost to the consumer of such grades as cube sugar and powdered sugar is entirely out of proportion to the increased cost of manufacture. In fact, these grades are to be classed as luxuries, or foods to be purchased only if the consumer has sufficient income so that he can afford to buy them.

Both cube sugar and powdered sugar are usually made from the same grade of stock as granulated sugar. The cube sugar has, however, been crystallized in lumps or "sugar loaves," and is then sawn into slices, and finally into cubes. Powdered sugar has been ground in a mill, similar to that used in making flour, and then sifted through bolting cloth, so as to be of uniform fineness. It is also very important that powdered sugar should be thoroughly dried, so as to prevent its caking upon storage. These sugars are sometimes colored blue with "ultramarine" so as to cover up the slightly yellow tint which is due to the retention of a small quantity of molasses. This process is of the same character as the bluing of clothes in the laundry, and is practiced for the same purpose.

On account of the recent high price of sugars, there would be greater danger of adulteration at the present time than formerly, and this adulteration, if it is practiced, would no doubt be tried on the most expensive sugars and those that were powdered, so that the presence of foreign sugars could not be so easily detected.

These facts have led us to make some examinations of the granulated sugars at present sold in this state, with the following results:

Something over twenty samples of the finest grade of powdered sugar, namely, the XXXX, have been collected by our inspectors and examined in the laboratory. As one requirement for powdered sugar is that it should be fine and free from lumps, some of the manufacturers have been putting a little starch into the sugar during the process of grinding. This can hardly be called adulteration, however, as it is not put in with the object of cheapening the product, but to improve its quality for a particular purpose. Starch is, furthermore, a food product, although less expensive than sugar. A mineral substance, if added to the sugar, would be considered an adulteration; as mineral substances are especially forbidden for use in sugar or confectionery.

Of the twenty samples analyzed five contained starch, and the maximum quantity found in any sample was 4 per cent. In one package, in which the label stated 2 per cent of starch was present, no starch was found. It is not uncommon, however, to find that the label does not truthfully describe the contents of the package. There was no indication of the presence of other substances than pure cane sugar in the samples examined.

Although the pure food and drugs laws are fairly well enforced, there is always the tendency in the trade to encroach as far as possible over the line. By ingenious labels, written by well-trained counsel, products are kept on the market almost in spite of the efforts of the authorities. Although the glaring frauds are eliminated, there is just as much need as ever for vigilance on the part of those who are working to protect the consumers from misrepresentation in foodstuffs.